

**A CHANGE OF CLIMATE:
A NEW ERA IN EU-AUSTRALIA RELATIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

On the 24th November 2007, Australians voted decisively for change. Or so it would seem. After almost 12 years in opposition, Kevin Rudd's Labor Party convincingly swept the conservative Liberal-National coalition government led by Prime Minister John Howard from office in what was labelled a "Ruddslide". Emblematic of the desire for change was the fact that Howard, despite being Australia's second longest-serving Prime Minister, became only the second prime minister in Australian history to have lost his seat in an election.

But in fact, it might be argued that the election was not won on the promise of change but on the lack of apparent change the new government would entail. In the lead up to the election, sceptics from both sides of politics suggested that Rudd did not represent a change of leadership, but a change merely of leader. Even that was questionable; sporting grey hair, similar glasses and conservative suits, the two leaders are, at a glance, almost indistinguishable. The similarities are not only physical. Both men are self-proclaimed economic and social conservatives and the entire campaign was characterised "me-too-ism".¹ This kind of political mimicry was decried as the end of ideological politics in Australia by some. Others praised Rudd's approach as a clever strategic move that acted to reassure voters nervous of change. Whether it was a victory for, or in the absence of, change, it was ultimately successful.

Post-election, the similarities have been much more difficult to spot. In his victory speech, Rudd declared that it was "time for a new page to be written in our nation's history"² and set about immediately to do just that, offering an official apology to Australia's indigenous population, dismantling the Howard government's draconian asylum seeker policy, rolling back the unpopular industrial relations changes and beginning the promised education 'revolution' – all within its first 100 days in office.

¹ See, for example, Ross Gittens, 'Why Rudd Keeps Saying Me Too Again and Again', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 August 2007.

² Kevin Rudd, Federal Election 2007 Acceptance Speech, 24th November 2007, <http://www.alp.org.au/media/1107/spepme240.php>; accessed 28 August 2008.

The new government further distinguished itself from the old with a new direction in its international relations and global engagement. According to the new government, an increasingly globalised world calls for Australia “to be more internationally active, not less; ...this will require a new period of active, creative Australian middle-power diplomacy”.³ Additionally, and importantly in this context, Rudd is intent “re-engaging Europe”.⁴ Adding substance to rhetoric, he embarked on an extended international tour early into his term. Significantly, the trip included an overnight stopover in Brussels to meet with the president of the European Commission President. It was the first time an Australian Prime Minister had included the EU headquarters on their inaugural international tour. Australia’s relationship with the EU has historically been characterised by asymmetry, apathy, antagonism and ambivalence.⁵ It now appears that Rudd is keen to add another “a” to the list, namely activism, adopting a more activist foreign policy and taking a pro-active approach in its relationship with Europe.

This paper seeks to critically assess the Rudd government’s promise of “a new era of creative engagement between Australia and the EU”.⁶ In order to do so, the paper first puts Rudd’s ‘new’ era of engagement into historical context, providing an overview of Australia’s ‘old’ connections to, and relations with, Europe and examining the various responses of Australia’s post-war governments to European integration. In particular, the paper compares

³ Kevin Rudd, ‘Address to the East Asia Forum in conjunction with the Australian National University, ‘Advancing Australia’s Global and Regional Economic Interests’ 26 March 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0145.cfm; accessed 20 May 2008.

⁴ Kevin Rudd, ‘Hard Heads, Soft Hearts: A Future Reform Agenda for the New Australian Government’, *Progressive Governance Conference*, London, 4 April 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0169.cfm; accessed 7 April 2008.

⁵ See, for example, Andrea Benvenuti, ‘Australia’s Battle against the CAP: Australia’s Battle against the Common Agricultural Policy: The Fraser Government’s Trade Diplomacy and the European Community’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1999, pp. 181-196; Andrea Benvenuti, ‘Facing the Inevitable: Britain’s Entry into the European Community and Australia’s Policy, 1970-72’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2007, pp. 251-266; Philomena Murray, Annmarie Elijah and Carolyn O’Brien, ‘Common Grounds, Worlds Apart: The Development of Australia’s Relationship with the European Union’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2002, pp. 395-416; Philomena Murray, ‘Problems of Summity and Symmetry in the EU-Australia Relationship’, in S. Lawson (ed.), *Europe and the Asia Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*, Curzon Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 65-85; On Australian apathy and ambivalence towards the relationship see Katrina Stats, ‘An Elephant in the Room? Australian Elite Perceptions of the European Union’, in Jessica Bain and Martin Holland (eds), *The EU’s New Identity and its Perception in Asia*, NESCA Series III, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2007, pp. 126-46.

⁶ Kevin Rudd and Jose Manuel Barroso, ‘Joint Statement, Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd, President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso’ (Brussels, 2 April 2008), http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0163.cfm; accessed 4 May 2008.

and contrasts Rudd's new rhetoric and activity with that of his predecessor, John Howard, in order to consider whether Rudd's leadership represents something new, not just in its relations with Europe, but in terms of its global engagement and political paradigm more broadly.

AUSTRALIAN RESPONSES TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The official Australian response to the process of integration in Europe was initially one of apathy. Menzies, who was Prime Minister at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, declared that "if Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg care to make a treaty with one another and ultimately to ratify it, that is their business and there is nothing that anybody can do about it".⁷ Italy, France, Germany, and the Benelux trio signing a treaty was one matter; but the UK's decision to join them was quite another, very serious matter for Australia, whose trade eggs were still kept largely in the British basket.

The eventual British accession in 1973 occurred under Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's watch. Whitlam's leadership was characterised by an unusual combination of nationalism (asserting independence from UK in foreign affairs) and internationalism. Hocking notes that "international involvement was an expected and unremarkable part of Whitlam's political engagement".⁸ His belief in liberal internationalism and commitment to the United Nations was demonstrated by his signing of the UN International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights in the first week of his term as Prime Minister, six years after they were adopted by the General Assembly.⁹ Whitlam's response to the UK's membership was largely positive, perceiving potential 'spillover' benefits for Australia.¹⁰ However, the reality was different. While the New Zealand government was able to negotiate favourable access conditions,¹¹ Australian lobbying did not result in any concessions being incorporated into the Treaty of Accession between the UK

⁷ Robert Menzies, press conference statement, Australia House, London, 9 July 1957.

⁸ Jenny Hocking, 'Post-War Reconstruction and the New World Order: The Origins of Gough Whitlam's Democratic Citizen', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2007, p. 232.

⁹ See *Ibid*, pp. 223-235.

¹⁰ Derek McDougall, *Australian Foreign Relations: Contemporary Perspectives*, Longman, South Melbourne, 1998, p. 82.

¹¹ See Steve Hoadley, *The New Zealand Foreign Affairs Handbook*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, Auckland, 1992, pp. 75-76.

and the EC¹² and Australia, as Elizabeth Wise observes, lost its biggest consumer almost overnight.¹³ This was the situation inherited by the next Prime Minister, Liberal leader, Malcolm Fraser.

Fraser, like many others, perceived Britain's decision to join Europe as a betrayal of its Commonwealth partners.¹⁴ Although the reality of the 'betrayal' has been contested by Spenceley and Welch and others, this was certainly the prevalent – and persistent – perception that became “a prominent frame of reference for Australian governments when dealing with the EEC/EU”.¹⁵ Viewing it as “a narrow self-interested trade group trying to make the world dance to its tune”,¹⁶ Fraser reportedly adopted “a bruising argumentative manner”¹⁷ and “uncompromising approach” in his dealings with the EC.¹⁸ Aware of the critical role of the Council of Ministers in the EC decision making,¹⁹ Fraser embarked on an unfruitful tour of European capitals in 1977 to lobby heads of states.

It was during this time that future Prime Minister, John Howard was appointed as a special envoy to the EC, charged with the task of negotiating concessions for Australian exports to Member States. Noting that his trip was not a success, Murray suggests that Howard “left Brussels with a very low opinion of the European integration project”.²⁰ Certainly, it was to temper his views of Europe later as Prime Minister of Australia.

¹² Philomena Murray, Annmarie Elijah and Carolyn O'Brien, 'Common Grounds, Worlds Apart: The Development of Australia's Relationship with the European Union', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2002, p. 398.

¹³ Elizabeth Wise, 'Australia Tries to Clear the Air for Sake of EU Trade Accord', *European Voice*, 8 February 1996.

¹⁴ Geoff Spenceley and Catherine Welch, 'The Myth of the British Betrayal: A reassessment of Australia and British Accession to the EEC', in P. Monteath and F. Zuckerman (eds), *Modern Europe: Histories and Identities*, Australian Humanities Press, Adelaide, 1998.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 389.

¹⁶ Malcolm Fraser, quoted in Derek McDougall, *Australian Foreign Relations: Contemporary Perspectives*, Longman, South Melbourne, 1998, p. 89.

¹⁷ Murray, Elijah and O'Brien, 'Common Grounds, Worlds Apart', pp. 399, 400.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ Andrea Benvenuti, 'Australia's Battle against the CAP: Australia's Battle against the Common Agricultural Policy: The Fraser Government's Trade Diplomacy and the European Community', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1999, p. 195.

²⁰ Philomena Murray, 'Australian Voices: Some Elite Reflections on the European Union', *CESAA Review*, October 2002.

When Labor took over in 1983, Prime Minister Bob Hawke made it clear that he had “no intention to return to the acrimonious debate of former years”.²¹ This was welcomed by the Europeans who noticed and remarked on “the new spirit which exists in the EC-Australia relationship”.²² Hawke’s “relatively non-confrontational”²³ diplomatic style yielded results for Australia including the Andriessen Agreement on subsidised beef exports. Relations were tested, however, by continued criticism of the CAP and the appointment of a Special Trade Commissioner to Europe to lobby individual MS which damaged relations, the EC threatening to abandon the 1986 Ministerial meetings as a result.²⁴ However, the increasing redundancy of lobbying Member States who had tied their economic horses firmly to the regional cart was not lost on Hawke who worked to forge stronger strategic regional alliances both through the Cairns Group, formed in 1986 and later, with the formation of APEC in 1989.

Hawke was replaced as Labor leader and Prime Minister by Paul Keating in 1991. Keating sought even deeper regional engagement and worked successfully to transform APEC from an informal discussion group into a more formal and effective body. Murray, Elijah and O’Brien argue that “Australia’s shift towards greater engagement and acceptance within the Asia-Pacific region can be seen as a shift *away from* Europe”.²⁵ However, it is important to note that despite his fervent promotion of the republican cause, and his desire “to sharpen the focus on the region around us”,²⁶ Keating was not oblivious to the importance for Australia of what was happening in Europe but understood “that the more Australia is integrated into [the Asia Pacific] and the closer our relations are with our Asian neighbours, the greater will be our relevance to Europe and our influence there on the things that matter

²¹ ‘New Spirit in EC-Australian Ministerial Talks’, *EC News*, vol. 2, no. 3, April 1984, pp. 1-2.

²² CEC, ‘High Level Consultations Community-Australia’, document BIO/85/213, 14 June 1985 cited in Philomena Murray, Annmarie Elijah and Carolyn O’Brien, ‘Common Grounds, Worlds Apart: The Development of Australia’s Relationship with the European Union’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2002, p. 400.

²³ Benvenuti, ‘Australia’s Battle against the CAP’, p. 194.

²⁴ Andrea Benvenuti, ‘Australian Responses to the Common Agricultural Policy’, *Australasian Journal of European Integration*, vol. 1, 1998/9, pp. 71-2.

²⁵ Murray, Elijah and O’Brien, ‘Common Grounds, Worlds Apart’, p. 402. Emphasis in original.

²⁶ Paul Keating, ‘A Prospect of Europe’, Annual Robert Schuman Lecture, Sydney, 9 March 1997, <http://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/ces/Old%20site/europe.htm>; accessed 18 September 2008.

to us”.²⁷ Moreover, Keating’s focus on Asia was not necessarily, as is often assumed, at the expense of Europe. It was Keating who, in 1995, first pursued a comprehensive Framework Agreement for Australia with the EU to give “formal expression” to the relationship.

Tony Kevin has argued that “The most profound shock to Australian foreign policy was not 9/11 but [the] change of government in 1996.”²⁸ For the new Prime Minister, Liberal leader John Howard, the “national interest” came first, second and third and was pursued in accordance with a strictly realist picture of the world as “a basically ruthless and dangerous place devoid of benign and universal authority”.²⁹ Foreign policy was framed almost exclusively in terms of the national interest as indicated by the titles of the two foreign policy White Papers produced by the government during its term: *In the National Interest* (1997) and *Advancing the National Interest* (2003).

The language of “good international citizenship” that Labor had inserted into Australia’s political vocabulary in the post-war period was deliberately removed from the government’s foreign policy discourse, an action proved “to be far more than symbolic”.³⁰ The Howard government eschewed many aspects of multilateralism, partially withdrawing from the UN human rights treaty system in 2000 following international condemnation of Australia’s treatment of both its indigenous population and asylum seekers, and defying the UN when it supported the US’s war in Iraq, demonstrating the government’s general disdain for multilateral and supranational organisations. This was also demonstrated by the fact that the EU barely managed to rate a mention in the White Papers, and was referred to somewhat patronisingly as simply one of the “major European organisations”.³¹ Bilateral relations

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Tony Kevin, ‘Purging Howard’s National Insecurity’, 4 April 2008, <http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?acid=6519>; accessed 15 September 2008.

²⁹ Tow, 2004, p. 12.

³⁰ Attorney General, Labor MP, Robert McClelland, ‘Regaining Australia’s International Reputation’, Speech to ALP National Conference, 29 April 2007, <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0407/spefa291.php>; accessed 15 September 2008.

³¹ Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, *In the National Interest: Australia’s Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper*, Canberra, 1997, p. 67.

formed the “cornerstone”³² of the government’s foreign policy approach and the US relationship was pre-eminent.

Although the Framework Agreement negotiations instigated by Keating continued initially under Howard, they subsequently collapsed in 1997, reportedly as a result of the Australian government’s objections to the EU’s standard human rights clause and concerns that it would allow domestic disputes to be taken to the EU.³³ The Framework Agreement was replaced with a diluted and largely symbolic Joint Declaration.

Howard’s disinterest in the EU was illustrated by the fact that he did not make his first (and only) official trip to Brussels as Prime Minister until his third term in government, nearly seven years after his initial election to office, and comments he made before that trip suggested that his views had not changed in 25 years since his earlier role as special envoy. Taking his cue from Fraser, Howard concentrated on improving Australia’s bilateral relations with Member States and lobbying his European counterparts for Australian trade concessions with limited success. His Europeans counterparts seemed quite bemused, perhaps even irritated by his attempts to pursue CAP reform in this manner.³⁴ As Prodi pointed out in a press conference, their discussions in Brussels, just as they were 25 years ago, were largely concerned with the “delicate” issue of agriculture.³⁵ Kyoto was another notable sticking point, Howard insisting that although “Australia remains committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions...[w]e currently don’t see it as in our national interests”.³⁶

³² John Howard, ‘Ready For The Future: Australia’s International Relations’, 22 August 2001, Address to the Menzies Research Centre, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10052/20080118-1528/pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2001/speech1183.html>; accessed 16 September 2008.

³³ See Fred Brenchley, ‘Canberra, EU Dodge Human Rights Stand-Off’, *Australian Financial Review*, 28 April 1997, p. 7.

³⁴ See Gerhard Schroeder, Joint Press Conference with Australian Prime Minister John Howard and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, Berlin, 2 July 2008, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10052/20080118-1528/pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2002/interview1718.html>; accessed 16 September 2008.

³⁵ Romano Prodi, Joint Press Conference with the Prime Minister of Australia, The Hon. John Howard MP and Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, Brussels, 10 July 2002, <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10052/20080118-1528/pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2002/interview1737.html>; accessed 16 September 2008.

³⁶ John Howard, *ibid.*

The election of Rudd's Labor government in November 2007 offered new hope for EU-Australia relations. In contrast to Howard, Rudd's approach to foreign policy approach is underpinned by a sensitivity to "[t]he collapse of the divide between the foreign and the domestic, the internal, the external, the international and the national".³⁷ Moreover, there is a new cosmopolitan imperative to the political narrative, which Rudd has made explicit, arguing that "[we need to be guided by a new principle that encompasses not only what Australia can do for itself, but also what Australia can do for the world."³⁸ Keen to recover Australia's reputation as a good international citizen, the Rudd government acted quickly on a number of key election promises.³⁹ In particular, and demonstrating the urgency with which Labor accorded the issue, the first official act of the new government was to sign the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This was a highly symbolic act, distancing the new government from the noted 'anti-internationalism'⁴⁰ of its predecessor, reflecting its commitment to multilateralism (enshrined as the "second pillar" of Labor's foreign policy), and its intention to adopt "an increasingly activist ... international policy". This is also indicated by his announcement that Australia will seek a seat on the UN Security Council in 2013-14.

Though less central to Labor's platform, the re-negotiation of a Framework Agreement is another long-standing election promise, which Rudd pursued on his visit to Brussels. Supporting Rudd's claim that EU-Australia relations have entered a new era, the new Partnership Framework to replace the Joint Declaration is due to be signed in October 2008 and plans are now underway for Barroso to visit Australia, the first visit from an European Commission President since 1982.

Perhaps the most interesting development so far has been Rudd's suggestion for an Asia Pacific Union, drawing inspiration from, but not directly modelled on, the European Union.

³⁷ Kevin Rudd, Opening of the Hedley Bull Centre, Australian National University, 6 August 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0399.cfm; accessed 16 September 2008.

³⁸ Kevin Rudd, 'Faith in Politics', *The Monthly*, no. 17, October 2006.

³⁹ Robert McClelland, 'Regaining Australia's International Reputation', Speech to ALP National Conference, 29 April 2007, <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0407/spefa291.php>; accessed 15 September 2008.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Spencer Zifcak, 'The New Anti-Internationalism: Australia and the United Nations Human Rights Treaty System', La Trobe University Discussion Paper No. 54, The Australia Institute, April 2003.

Like European integration, the primary purpose of the proposed union is to secure lasting peace and prosperity in the region.⁴¹

However, it is worth considering whether Rudd's new rhetoric – and the action that has followed – really does represent a break with, or, rather, merely a continuance of the past. Rudd has repeatedly employed the old, familiar refrains of the previous government. On the evening of his election victory, for example, he made a “solemn pledge to the nation: I will always govern in the national interest”.⁴² Similarly, while his first international tour seemed to confirm his new foreign policy ambitions and the realignment of the national interest in an international context, he was at pains to stress “that the trip [was] all about how the world affects Australia at home”⁴³ and described the government's new direction as “the rational thing to do in pursuit of our own core economic and security interests”.⁴⁴

Despite having jumped on the internationalist bandwagon with the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, climate change is still being promoted as an “economic opportunity” for Australia.⁴⁵ Although the government is yet to comment on the report from its chief climate change advisor, Ross Garnaut, which recommends conservative cuts of just 10% by 2020, early indications suggest that Rudd, like Howard before him, is determined to protect the national interest when it comes to climate change. He qualified his position during the election campaign, saying his government would not approve “a new climate-control agreement unless China and India do, too, lest they gain an economic edge over Australia”. This, as Gemma Daley notes, is “the same rationale Howard offer[ed] for refusing to sign Kyoto”.⁴⁶ Instead of being an “area of increasing convergence” between the EU and

⁴¹ Kevin Rudd, Address to the Asia Society AustralAsia Centre, Sydney, ‘It's Time to Build an Asia Pacific Community’, 4 June 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0286.cfm; accessed 26 August 2008..

⁴² Rudd, Federal Election 2007 Acceptance Speech.

⁴³ Phillip Coorey, ‘The Middle Man’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April 2008, p. 29.

⁴⁴ Rudd, ‘Address to the East Asia Forum’.

⁴⁵ Simon Crean, Speech at the Launch of ‘European Australian Business’ 2008 Edition, Canberra, 5 May 2008, http://www.trademinister.gov.au/speeches/2008/080505_european_aust_business.html; accessed 26 August 2008.

⁴⁶ Gemma Daley, Australia, Bloomberg, 23 November 2008, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aFTqIJoE_5ho; accessed 28 August 2008.

Australia,⁴⁷ climate change is thus an issue on which Australia, under Rudd's direction, is yet to prove it is willing to 'walk the talk'.

Challenging claims of a new era is the fact that an upgrade of EU-Australia relations was already on the cards under the previous Coalition government. In March 2007, Howard's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced that a new partnership framework would be concluded in March 2008.⁴⁸ Likewise, Rudd's proposal for an Asia Pacific Union is not a novel idea. John Howard mooted a similar proposal at the Pacific Islands Forum in 2003 and in 2004, the Auckland Declaration was signed, authorising the restructuring of the organisation to transform it "it into a highly proactive body carrying the highest political mandate to manage not merely each island-state's affairs but the region's interests in the most strategic and coherent way possible".⁴⁹

There are, however, important differences between Howard's vision of a regional union and Rudd's. Howard's was a reactive proposal that reflected his frustration with increasing global regionalism and was designed primarily with a view to augmenting Australia's strategic weight in international fora and less with common regional benefits, as implied by the much ridiculed suggestion that the Australian dollar would become the common currency. By contrast, Rudd has presented the idea as a proactive response to new global realities of the modern era, and has repeatedly stressed the common benefits of developing "a genuine and comprehensive sense of community whose habitual operating principle is cooperation."⁵⁰

Similarly, while no doubt improving on the four page, dot-point Joint Declaration currently governing EU-Australia relations, a Partnership Framework negotiated under the Howard government would most likely have remained limited by differences such as the EU's linkage

⁴⁷ Crean, Speech at the Launch of 'European Australian Business' 2008 Edition.

⁴⁸ Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, 'Australia and the European Union Set the Direction for Future Relations', Media Release, 25 June 2007, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2007/fa075_07.html; accessed 22 September 2008; Alexander Downer, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, '2007 Australia – European Commission Ministerial Consultations', Joint Statement, 25 June 2007, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2007/Joint_Statement.pdf; accessed 22 September 2008.

⁴⁹ Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, 'Laid-Back to High Alert', *The Australian*, 5 April 2004, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Kevin Rudd, 'Building a Better World Together', Speech at Kyoto University, 9 June 2008, http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0294.cfm; accessed 10 September 2008.

of trade and human rights in its international agreements. Rudd's reaffirming of Australia's commitment to international treaties and multilateral organizations effectively removes this obstacle from the negotiations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has identified a distinct change in the foreign policy approach of the new Rudd Labor government in general, and towards Europe in particular, in contrast to Howard's Coalition government. Whereas Howard viewed the domestic as separate from the international, Rudd views the two as inseparable. Whereas Howard shunned the UN and avoided multilateral engagement, Rudd has reconfirmed Australia's commitment to the UN.... And whereas Howard tended to ignore the EU and privilege relations with Member States, Rudd has expressly sought to engage it. By situating this political change of heart in the context of Australia's historical relations with Europe, it becomes clear that this is not a radical departure from, but rather a continuation of, Labor's traditional liberal internationalism and its general receptiveness to European integration, suggesting that "[w]hen history knocks, it matters a great deal who answers the door."⁵¹

However, the paper also identified some apparent contradictions of his foreign policy – maintaining the US alliance while at the same time, distancing itself from US foreign policy and pursuing closer relations with Europe, for example, and adopting an active internationalist stance while still declaring to always rule in the national interest – which might, alternatively, indicate that Rudd has simply put his own brand on Australia's traditional pragmatic realist approach to its global engagement.

But is it fair to be so cynical? And are these really irresolvable contradictions? The former Labor Foreign Minister (largely responsible for the infusion of good international citizenship rhetoric into Labor policy) Gareth Evans, now President of the International Crisis Group

⁵¹ Peter Hartcher, 'Why the Election Matters', 23 November 2007, <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/national/why-the-election-matters/2007/11/22/1195753249218.html>; accessed 31 August 2008.

has suggested, “much of good international citizenship is not really selfless at all”.⁵² Moreover, “a *reputational* advantage accrues which can be very useful indeed when an issue comes along that is more important to us than to others, and on which *we* want *others*’ support”.⁵³ But national interest and the desire for reputational advantage do not, however, preclude internationalist outcomes; rather, they can be instrumental in creating the public support and legitimacy required to pursue such goals, which were noticeably absent from the agenda of the previous Australian government.

Importantly, Rudd has established a new political narrative and it is one that, while fitting within the Labor tradition, differs considerably from that of his Liberal predecessor, John Howard. History *is* knocking and asking for direction. And as Rudd himself has said, “It is a far better thing for Australia and the world that we are intelligently debating these propositions about how to shape the world’s future ... then simply sitting back and waiting for events to unfold.”⁵⁴

⁵² Gareth Evans, President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, ‘Australia’s Foreign Policy Response to Global Challenges’, Address to Advance 100 Global Australians Summit, Sydney Opera House, 19 December 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4590>; accessed 15 September 2008.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Rudd, Opening of the Hedley Bull Centre.